



## black-crowned night-heron

*Nycticorax nycticorax*

Kingdom: Animalia  
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates  
Class: Aves  
Order: Ciconiformes  
Family: Ardeidae

### Features

An adult black-crowned night-heron is 20 inches long. It has a heavy body, short thick neck, and short legs. The adult is dark-backed and white below. The heavily streaked immature black-crowned night-heron can be confused with the yellow-crowned night-heron and the American bittern.

### Natural History

The black-crowned night-heron winters from the southern United States to South America. It lives along freshwater marshes, ponds, lakes, or streams, as well as in mangrove swamps. This bird eats mainly fish, but also will eat insects, eggs and young birds, small mammals, and amphibians. Its call, a single "kwawk," is most frequently heard at night. Spring migrants arrive in Iowa in mid- to late April. The black-crowned night-heron often nests with other herons and egrets in trees, shrubs, or cattails. The male and female tend to the young. They usually breed at age two or three but can breed at age one. Both sexes

build the loosely constructed nest of sticks, twigs, or reeds. Three to five bluish green eggs are laid. Young hatch about mid-June.

### Habitats

natural lakes and prairie marshes; Mississippi River

### Iowa Status

uncommon; native

### Iowa Range

summer: northern half of Iowa and scattered in southern Iowa in suitable habitats; migrant: statewide

### Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.